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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 008252

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S DEEP STATE

REF: A. ANKARA 7606

[1](#)B. ANKARA 7230

[1](#)C. ANKARA 2431

[1](#)D. ANKARA 7682

[1](#)E. ANKARA 7683

[1](#)F. ANKARA 8165

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson; reasons: 1.5 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Turkish Deep State, the behind-the-scenes machinery and power relationships among selected members of the military, judici

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The Apparat of the Turkish State  
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[1](#)2. (C) Turks are statist in that they have been inculcated to believe in an immanent, authoritative State power disconnected from, and superi

[1](#)3. (C) In describing this relationship, Ankara's reporting has distinguished between the formal, Kemalist State, whose unaccountability is prc

[1](#)4. (C) One former NSC staffer explained to us that the heart of the Deep State is the presidency (which on paper has limited powers), the mili

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The Special Problem of Unaccountability  
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[1](#)5. (C) The lack of accountability in the Kemalist State in general, and more specifically in the Deep State, is a legacy from three sources. F

[1](#)6. (C) A variety of political, academic, and journalist contacts tells us that this unaccountability of the Deep State manifests itself in dif

--Senior politicians from several parties have described to us the challenge Parliament faces in trying to keep track of all aspects of the Deep State's activities, including the budgets and expenditures of various military funds.

--Contacts remind us that at times the Deep State has relied on extra-judicial enforcement of its views. While this usually means use of hints or indirect intimidation, in the past it has also involved an unsavory nexus among security and intelligence services; the armed forces; and groups -- such as (Turkey's) Hizbullah and mafias -- fostered by them. The Susurluk scandal, which broke in 1996, is emblematic of this aspect of the Deep State (ref C and previous).

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The Military  
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[1](#)7. (C) The Turkish military has demonstrated its presence at the heart of the Deep State not through any provision of the constitution but through Article 35 of the Internal Services of the Turkish Armed Forces Law, which states that the military has the "duty to protect and safeguard the Republic of Turkey." It has carried out four coups in 42 years. The current (1982) constitution was drafted under military direction. Moreover, the military has expanded its oversight by penetrating in a significant way into the industrial and financial sectors through its officer pension fund Oyak. This monitoring function shows itself in other ways as well. Referring to a report in Nov. 7 Kemalist "Cumhuriyet" that the West Working Group has been reactivated, our former NSC/WWG staffer contact told us the group has been up and running under a new name since May 2002 "in monitoring mode for now."

[1](#)8. (C) While new Chief of the TGS Gen. Ozkok is showing patience at the beginning of AK's tenure, we are hearing reports that institutional interests, pressures from younger officers to take a harder line, and suspicions of some senior commanders that Ozkok is "too liberal" are making their presence felt in the military hierarchy. That said, the upper policy-making levels at TGS appear to share Ozkok's perspective. At the same time, retired Navy CNO Ilhami Erdil, who had just made a round of the service chiefs, told the Ambassador Nov. 6 that the military leadership will be watching AK carefully, paying particular attention to the appointments of the next P.M. and ministers of defense, justice, interior, and education. Erdil noted the importance to the generals of "keeping parliamentarians in line" and indicated that the generals have three red lines: Kemalism, "secularism", and territorial integrity.

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The Judiciary -- and the Establishment Press  
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[1](#)9. (S) A long-serving Justice of the Constitutional Court (the Turkish Supreme Court) recently described to us the workings and influence of the Deep State, by which he meant primarily military domination of the Turkish system. The judiciary, he explained, is not independent, but a subordinate, albeit important, part of the wider machinery perpetuating the Kemalist status quo. As he described it, the legal educational system is set up to produce unimaginative, narrow-minded judges and prosecutors indoctrinated with the State's official Kemalist ideology. More important, judicial fealty to Kemalism and to the Deep State is the result of a fear so pervasive, the Justice asserted, that it is "difficult for Americans to appreciate."

Mindful of the threat of force implicit in the Deep State's orders to civilians, judges and prosecutors fear that if they deviate from the orthodoxy they will be entangled in career-blunting reprimand procedures, demoted, hounded out of office, or worse. Those relatively few judicial officials willing to resist such pressure usually are transplants to the judicial bureaucracy from outside that system.

¶10. (S) The Justice explained that while the Deep State can make its views clear by directly communicating them through "telephone justice" to judicial officials, word is most often promulgated indirectly through the National Security Council, and by senior journalists who are known to have special relationships with the powers-that-be: he acknowledged Sedat Ergin of mass circulation "Hurriyet" as an exemplar (in a subsequent conversation, AK Party vice chairman Mercan spoke in similar terms about "paid agents" in the press such as "Hurriyet"'s Fatih Altayli). According to the Justice, Deep State pressure and influence has transformed Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. In his view -- and in our experience -- Sezer was much more willing to promote democratic freedom and human rights during his tenure as Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, where he served before becoming Head of State. As President, however, Sezer has been pressured into adopting the more restrictive line set by the military-dominated NSC.

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The Bureaucracy at Large  
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¶11. (S) In early October a 40-year-old Turk who has entered center-right politics in the footsteps of his father after a career in an elite ministry and in the presidency gave us other insights into how the Turkish Deep State works. He explained that, in every bureaucracy and every ilce (provincial county), the Deep State has individuals it can rely on to (1) keep tabs on internal developments and (2) to make clear the Deep State position on particular issues that concern national security. This system involves not only ministries, such as Interior, that traditionally have been associated with maintaining domestic peace and order, but Education and others deemed to play an essential role in maintaining the dominance of Kemalist institutions and ideas. Someone in each ilce will have the keys to the local arsenal ("How do you think the right-wing nationalist MHP supporters got their guns during the murderous clashes of the late 1970's?" he asked). A local Education Ministry rep will know that he is slated to become rector of a certain university some years down the line if he carries out his Deep State functions well.

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Comment  
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¶12. (C) Deep State views continue to exercise leverage over the political game in Turkey, and as such constitute a major obstacle to democratization and reform. However, Deep State supremacy is not all-efficient: as one staunch secularist put it, "the Deep State is very, very deep, like a diver under the sea" (i.e., so deep it's unable to move in a supple way in the faster-paced contemporary world). And the Deep State is beginning to be challenged with an openness rare in the history of the Turkish Republic. The push is step by step. It must contend with centuries of ingrained habit and fear. But various political strands, tapping the growing popular dissatisfaction with the Kemalist status quo, are slipstreaming behind Turkey's formal bid for EU membership to push for sweeping changes in the current status of civilian-military/individual-State relations and to challenge other Kemalist verities (refs D,E).

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